

Judging the Dwarf Hotot "The Eyes of the Fancy"

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I feel I must begin my presentation by trying to set you straight on two major misconceptions concerning the Dwarf Hotot.

The first of these has plagued this breed almost since it's beginning. Please begin your judging by realizing that the Dwarf Hotot is NOT the "jaws of the Rabbit World," a reputation achieved during its early career as an ARBA accepted breed and a reputation that still follows it in some people's minds even today. At one time, I admit, there was a strain or two around the country that apparently did deserve the reputation. However, I believe those are gone! Most serious Dwarf Hotot breeders have worked hard to get rid of this trait, and have been successful. Personally, I have raised them since 1983, and I have never had the problem. I did see one, but that was at the Convention in Madison, WI (1988). I have not seen another one in my experience as a breeder nor as an ARBA Judge. The Dwarf Hotot of today is no more likely to bite than most other breeds.

A second misconception that seems to prevail among some of us is that the Dwarf Hotot should be judged as a marked animal. It SHOULD NOT be judged as though it were a marked breed. It is, rather a dwarf-type rabbit that happens to have a black eyeband surrounding its eyes and a pure white body. There are 15 points assigned to the eyebands, but 65 to general type: 15 each on the head and ears and 35 on the body. Assessing the animal on eyeband alone is an injustice. You might as well judge the animal on just its ears. It makes sense. After all, they are worth 15 points, same as the eyeband and they have the advantage of being more readily compared to each other for conformation and balance!

That Eye Band

Having said that, let's turn our attention to the eyeband, since it is the first thing we do notice. Notice, it is called an eyeband, not a circle, because it should follow the natural lines of the eye lids. The Standard of Perfection calls for a narrow, well-defined band of black colored fur. The last word is of utmost importance. It is there to preclude the possibility of such a narrow line of coloration that you end up with color limited to the lid itself. So remember, the colored portion has to be fur!!

With the current standards, measurement for the minimum and maximum width was dropped. What we should look for is a well-defined line. The wider the band, the more likely it is to become ragged and feathered. This is the case because as we move away from the eye, we go from very short fur to longer and longer fur. The longer the fur, the less well defined band you will see. If there is heavy feathering (running of color into the longer fur), the animal should be disqualified. The same applies to any break in the band or any missing band.

Check the Eyes

This complete, narrow, well-defined band outlines a dark brown eye that must be free from spots or marbling. Please do check those eyes! Hold the rabbit at, or above your eye level. Check for blue spots or marbling. If you think you see a spot, a word of caution: keep your eye on it and slowly change the angle of the rabbit's head to your eyes through rotation. If the spot remains in the same place, then you have a DQ. If it moves as you rotate the rabbit, then you have a reflection. For some reason, I find the Dwarf Hotot eyes extremely subject to this latter -- reflecting light in such a way that it appears to have a blue spot. So remember, DQ for a spot, not for a reflection.

General Type

Having pointed out these two areas, let me say that from here on we will be basically talking about a Netherland Dwarf that is allowed to be 3/4 pound larger. A careful reading of the standards of the two breeds will tell you this. There is even a remarkably similar point allocation.

So, we should be looking for a relatively large, broad head, with no visible neck. When checking this out, be sure to look for a dewlap on does. If you find one, this is a disqualification! What I like to do is stand back and look at the class as they sit in the holding boxes on the table. If there is anything like a dewlap, it will show up as the animal sits in its normal position. Make sure you have a dewlap and not just a pencil line or roll of fur.

Body-wise we are looking for a short, compact animal with shoulders as broad as its hips. We should look for balance in the animal. That means good depth at the shoulders to match the width and a slight rise as we move toward the hips. They should be well-rounded, smooth, and filled. Fault an animal with narrow shoulders. Fault also for narrow hips and hindquarters that are not full to the table.

The Ears

We should be looking for ears that are short (ideal length of 2.25"; DQ if over 2.75"), well furred and with good substance. They must be carried erect and should be slightly rounded at the tips. While checking out the ears, look carefully for spots of color that constitute a DQ. A spot of color on the back of the ear should never be assumed to be tattoo ink, even if the rabbit has been recently tattooed. If in doubt, you can check the spot by wetting your finger or a towel and rubbing gently at the spot. If any color comes off on your finger or towel, then it is ink and you can let it go. If no color comes off, then you have a colored spot and the animal should be DQ'ed. If any doubt exists in your mind, then give the animal the benefit. However, I would suggest you mention that you are doing so, just so the exhibitor is aware of the situation.

You need to look carefully at the base of the ears, as spots love to hide there. Another clue to a spot on the ear is often a brown or dis-colored spot on the inside of the ear. Usually, a spot appears on the outside of the ear opposite that discoloration.

Another area that colored spots seem to magically appear and cause Dwarf Hotot breeders frustration is at or near the tip off the ear. These are small points of colored fur, but definitely noticeable. They are rarely seen in juniors, but appear in some seniors. If you can see the spot, it is a spot, and the animal should be disqualified. I am not going to get into counting hairs (on the edge of the ear, the fur is very short and fine); if you see a spot, then the animal should be DQ'ed!

The Fur

The fur is to be soft, dense, and fine with a good luster and a gentle rollback. Again, this is the same fur we look for on a Netherland Dwarf. It should be faulted for any other kind of fur.

Again, as you check the fur, look for foreign colored spots. There are a number of places that spots like to show up: over the hips, behind the ears, on the tip of the nose, etc. A favorite place for a spot, which is often missed is on the lower hip, right behind the tail. I have also found enough black hairs in the tail on some animals to constitute a spot.

Summary

What is a Dwarf Hotot? It is a compact animal with wide shoulders and good depth. It has a bold, rounded head with short erect ears. It is a pure white animal that has a black marking around the eye.

It should not be judged as a marked animal., nor should it be considered "the jaws of the rabbit world."